

RE STRUCTURING THE SOCIAL
A RE READING ALL MANJERI RAMA IYER

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
CALICUT PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENT FOR
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“RE STRUCTURING THE SOCIAL: A RE
READING ON
MANJERI RAMA IYER” is a bona fide record of work written
by Anju Benny under my supervision and guidance for the partial
fulfillment of the requirement of master of Arts in history of the
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DECLARATION

I ANJU BENNY, do here by declare that this dissertation entitled “RE STRUCTRING THE SOCIAL: A RE READING ON MANJERI RAMA IYER”,

Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of degree of master of Arts in History in a bona fide research work carried out by me during 2020-2021 under the guidance of Mr. **Sajith Kumar M** , Asst. Professor of Department of History, Govt. College Madappally, and it has previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree or Diploma.

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INTRODUCTION

There are seed a number of movements on the eve of independence, which contributed much for the society and fought for the freedom of our nation .One such movement was the Home Rule league. The Indian Home Rule was movement in British Indian on the lines of Irish Home Rule Movement and other Home rule Movements. The Movement lasted around two years between 1916 -1918 and is believed to have set the stage for the independent movement and under the leadership of Annie Besant all over the India .In the 20th century the leaders in the north were clamoring for home rule and self -governance. Dr. Annie Besant, who in connection with the theosophical society cameto Adayar, Tamilnad in 1896.

Between 1916 and 1918 when the war was beginning prominent Indian like Joseph Baptista, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Bal Gangadhara Tilak, G S Khaparde, Sir Subramanya Iyer, surendranadh banarjee, Subhash Chandra Bose and the leaders of the theosophical society. Annie besant decided to organize a national alliance of leagues across India, specifically to demand home rule or self- government with in the British Empire for all of India, Tilak founded the first home rule league at Bombay, provincial congress at Belgium in April 1916. Then after this Annie Besant founded second league at Adayar, madras in September 1916. Not only Annie Besant but also Bal Gangadhara Tilak, Home Rule Leagues functioned throughout the year as opposed to the congress party whose activities were confined to once a year .The movement was able to garner a huge support from a lot of educated Indians. In 1917, the two leagues combined had around 40,000 members.

The moderates, extremists and the Muslim League were briefly united through this movement .The movement was able to spread political consciousness to more regions in the country. This movement led to the Montague Declaration of 1917 in which it was declared that there would be more Indians in the government leading to the development of self- governing institution ultimately realizing responsible government in India. As stated earlier Theosophical Society comes to

Adayar, Tamil Nadu in 1896, Soon shifted to Kozhikode. People like Manjeri Rama Iyer and many other Malabar nationalists who were part of the Malabar Congress committee took it up seriously. At Calicut, Manjeri Rama Iyer emerged the fiercest proponent for the home rule league. Rama Iyer soon became the president of the home rule league in Malabar while K.P.Kesavamenon worked as its secretary. He spread Besant's ideology and the Mangalore Theosophical society owes its success to Manjeri Rama Iyer.

Manjeri Rama Iyer was a theosophist and was a social reformer and lawyer, social worker and founder of the theosophical society in Calicut and politician in Malabar. He was not just a freedom fighter, fighting for Indian freedom from the British, but was above all one who helped large masses of people in Malabar and Kerala obtain freedom from the many social evils of that time.

There are a number of studies that have taken place about home rule movement. But the contributions rendered by the leaders like, Manjeri Rama Iyer and other prominent social reformers, who fought against the social and political condition, were not given much consideration and are widely ignored in the annals of history barring a few mentions, may be, mainly because they supported and promoted the aspirations of the lower castes. Their interventions were brave and dynamic and hence they deserve special mentions in the annals of history.

Manjeri Rama Iyer was the most important personality among the theosophists in India. All though there has been a lot of research on the home rule movement in Kerala, the academic study about its leaders like, Manjeri Rama Iyer was meagre. They didn't get any recognition as social reformers yet.

Hence the present dissertation is an attempt to study the contribution of home rule movement and its leaders in the freedom struggle with special reference to the role played by Manjeri Rama Iyer.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The present study is necessitated the use of heuristics method, which the usual techniques of collections and critical analysis of data from different sources.

The secondary sources consisted in the form of English published books and Malayalam published books, articles, unpublished PhD Thesis and internet sources also.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Objective of this dissertation is to analysis the role of Manjeri Rama Iyer and Home Rule Movement in Kerala, for which the following objectives are traced;

- To study the contribution of Manjeri Rama Iyer in the field of socio- religious reform.
- To understand the role played by Rama Iyer in the Home Rule Movement in Kerala.
- To understand the policy and programs of the Home Role Movement in India in general and in Kerala in particular.
- To understand the activities of the movement for the socio-cultural progress of the society.
- To study the Theosophical Society and its contributions in

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Even after 1st century of Home Rule Movement, available literature on the movement is limited in the scope and perspective. The available literature is evaluating in nature.

The historical background of the movement, its main causes and the extent to which they have succeeded for fail is not matter of importance to many of the literature. But some of these studies are useful to understand the main incident related with the movement.

‘Manjeri Rama Iyyer-A social Worker and Freedom Fighter, category: Malabar history, personalities- Maddy Friday, June 20, 2014’, it is an important source of information to understand Manjeri Rama Iyer. It provided the important information of Rama Iyer entire life. It would very useful to the study of the Manjeri Rama Iyer.

Bipan Chandra and four others co-authored by the book ‘India Struggle for Independence’. In this book give detailed accounts of one chapter is that ‘The Home Rule Movement and its Fallout’. The book is very helpful to re-construct and understand Indian Home Rule Movement and the role played by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant.

Dr. P.M. Ismael written by the work ‘Ouest for social justice: MALABAR (1882-1947) ’, this book is provided the important accounts on Tiyas, National Movement in Kerala and especially Home Rule Movement in Malabar etc... It is very well helpful to understand the condition of that period in India.

The study like ‘Modern Indian History, from 1707 to the present day’ written by V.D. Mahajan, ‘The History and Culture promoting brotherhood’ written by Sunil Naliyat etc...are highly useful to study the topic.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE STUDY

The dissertation comprised of chapter.

- The first chapter entitled as the 'Home Rule Movement And Theosophical Society- A Historical Background'.
- Second chapter discussed 'Manjeri Rama Iyer Early Political Career And Activitis'.
- Third chapter discuss 'Manjeri Rama Iyer AS A Theosophist And Social Actist'.

CHAPTER 1

HOME RULE MOVEMENT AND THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There are seed a number of movements on the eve of independence, which contributed much for the upliftment of the society and fought for the freedom of our nation. The home rule movement and theosophical society were to prominent venues that played a major role in the national freedom the fag-end of the 19th century nationalism as an ideology and practice slowly spread from the cities and towns to the nearby villages . The Indian national Congress became the embodiment of nationalist activities and aspirations . The Indian national was undoubtedly one of the biggest movements of modern society has ever seen, it was a movements which galvanized millions of people of all classes and ideologies into political action and brought to its knees a mighty colonial empire. Consequently, along with the British, French, Russian , China, Cuban and Vietnam revolutions, it is of great relevance to those wishing to alter the existing political and social structure .

During the days of World War I when the Indian soldiers were sheelding their blood in the side of Britain ostensibly for cause of saving democracy, some nationalist leaders of India decided to demand the same for India from Britain. Eventually, they started an agitation against political slavery of their countrymen. This agitation, known as "Home Rule Movement" thus served as a bold prelude to still bolder political movements in the coming days¹. Indian Home Rule Movement in British Indian on the lines of Irish home rule movement lasted around two years between 1916 -1918. The Surat Congress led to the split of the Indian National Congress. It affected the national movement which lost momentum. But the world war 1st offered an opportunity for the union of extremist and the moderates. As result, the national movement was accelerated by the home rule movement between the year 1916 and 1918, the independence movement witnessed the growth and spread of the home rule movement spearheaded by leaders like, Bal Ganagadhar Thialk and Annie Besant .The aim of the home rule movement was the

attainment of home rule or a dominion status for India under the British umpire along the lines of countries like Canada and Australia .

¹ Dr. Lingaraj Rath, A Prelude to Gandhian Era: The Home Rule Movement , 2014, p .45.

In the Government of India Act is the first footsteps of home rule movement.

The government of India act 1909 was dissatisfactory to the aspirations of Indians. The congress party's splitting 1907 and fiery leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak's imprisonment from 1908 to 1914 meant that there was a lull in the national movement. But Tilak's release and the advent of Annie Besant brought about a revival a national movement. Having returned from exile in Mandalay, Tilak understood the need for a revival of the nationalist movement in the country .he also understood the growing importance of the congress party in India's political scene. So his first task was to get re admitted into the party (The extremists led by Tilak had separated from congress).In the congress session of December 1915, it was decided to let the extremists re-join the party largely due to Annie Besant's persuasion .Besant had also recognized the need for congress approval and the active participation of the extremists in the national struggle. However, Besant and Tilak were not able to convince congress to support their decision to set up home rule leagues. Besant managed to convince the congress to pledge to educative propaganda and the establishing of local - level committees. It was also agreed upon that if these conditions were not satisfied by September 1916, she would be free to setup home rule league. Accordingly , she setup her home rule league in September 1916 .Tilak , however , was not bound by any such conditions and so had setup his league in April 1916. The home rule movements have some objectives that are given below.

- To achieve self-government in India
- To promote political education and discussion to setup agitation for self-government
- To build confidence among Indians to speaks against the governments suppression
- To demand a larger political representation for Indians from the British government
- To revive political activity in India while maintaining the principles of the congress party

Between 1916 and 1918, when the war was beginning, prominent Indians like Joseph Baptista, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Bal Gangadhar Tilak ,

G.S. Khaparde, Sr. S. Subramania Iyer , Annie Besant, decided to organize a national alliance of leagues across India, specifically to demand Home Rule, or self-government within the British Empire for all of India. Tilak founded the first Home Rule league at Bombay provincial congress at Belgaum in April, 1916. Then after Annie Besant founded second league at Adayar near Madras in September 1916.

They had the common objective of achieving self- government in India. Home rule league major activities were given below

- The leagues organized demonstrations and agitations.
- There were public meetings in which the leaders gave fiery speeches.
- There were able to create a stir within the country and alarm the British to such an extent that Annie Besant was arrested in June 1917.
- This movement was created a nation -wide protest and now even moderate leaders joined the league. Besant was released in September 1917

The flag of home rule league was five red and four green horizontal stripes. On the upper left quadrant was the union flag, which signified the Dominion status that the movement sought to achieve. A crescent and a seven-pointed star, both in white, are set in top fly. Seven white stars are arranged as in the saptarishi constellation (the constellation Ursa major), which is sacred to Hindus. In 1916, Suraiya Tayyabji submitted thirty new designs, in the form of a booklet funded members of the high court of Madras. These many proposals and recommendations did little more than keep the flag movement alive. The same year, Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak adopted a new flag as a part of the home rule movement. The flag resulted in the first governmental initiative against any nationalist flag, as a magistrate in Coimbatore banned its use. The ban was followed by public debate on function and importance of a national flag.

BAL GANGADHAR TILAK AND HOME RULE LEAGUE.

Lokmanya Tilak, born as Keshav Gangadhar Tilak (23 July 1856 - 1 August 1920), was an Indian nationalist, journalist, teacher, social reformer, lawyer and independence activist. Who was the first popular leader of the Indian Independence Movement. The British colonial authorities described him "father of the Indian unrest"². Tilak joined the Indian national congress in 1890. He opposed its moderate attitude especially towards the fight for self government. He was one of the mainly eminent radicals at the time. The part of his political activity. He was charged with incitement to murder and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment. When he appeared from prison, he was revered as a martyr and a national hero³.

²Modern Indian Political Thought, Rai technology university, p.102

³ibid

He adopted a new slogan, "swaraj (self rule) is my birthright and I shall have it". On 16 June 1914, Bal Gangadhar Tilak was released after serving a prison sentence of six years, most of which he had spend in Mandalay in Burma. He returned to India very different to the one he had been banished from Aurovindo Ghose. Tilak initially concentrated all his attention on seeking readmission, for himself and other extremists, in to the Indian National Congress⁴. The annual congress session in December 1914 was to prove a disappointment. Pherozeshah Mehta and his Bombay moderate group succeeded, by winning over Gokhale and the Bengal moderates, in keeping out the extremists.

Tilak and Besant there upon decided to revive political activity on their own, while maintaining their pressure on the congress to re-admit the extremist group⁵. Tilak promoted the home rule campaign with a tour of Maharashtra and through his lectures clarified and popularized the demand for home rule. 'India was like a son who had grown up and attained maturity it was right now that the trustee or the father should give him what was his due. The people of India must get this effected. They have right to do so'⁶. Tilak's league furthered its propaganda efforts by publishing six Marathi and two English pamphlets, of which 47,000 copies per sold pamphlets were brought out in Guajarati and Kannada as well. The league was organized into six branches, one each in central Maharashtra, Bombay city, Karnataka and central provinces, and two in Berar⁷. The 23rd of July, 1916, was Tilak's sixtieth birthday, and, according to custom, it was the occasion for a big celebration. A purse of Rs. One lakh was presented to him. The same day the Government offered him their own percent a notice asking him to show cause why he should not be bound over for good behavior for a period of one year and demanding securities of Rs. 60,000 for Tilak, this was the best gift he could have wanted for his birthday.

⁴Bipan Chandra and four others, India's struggle for independence 1857 - 1947, published by Penguin Random House, 1988, New Delhi, p. 140.

⁵ Ibid, p. 141.

⁶ Ibid, p. 143.

⁷ Ibid, p. 144.

Gandhiji's Young India summed up the popular feeling: "thus a great victory has been won for the cause of home rule which has, thus been freed from the chains that were sought to be put upon it⁸". Tilak immediately pushed home the advantage by proclaiming in his public speeches that home rule now had the sanction of the Government and he and his colleagues intensified their propaganda campaign for home rule. By April 1917 Tilak had enlisted 14,000 members.

Tilak travelled from village to village for support from farmers and locals to join the movement towards self-rule. The home rule movement became popular under Tilak's leadership. Tilak's approach was strong fair for the moderates Indian National Congress (Congress Party), which believed in making "loyal" representations to the government for small reforms. Tilak aimed at Swarajya (Independence), not piecemeal reforms, and attempted to adopt his militant program.

ANNIE BESANT AT A GLANCE

Annie Besant was a prominent British socialist, theosophist, writer and orator. She was born in 1st October 1847 at Clapham, London to parents of Irish roots. After the early death of her father in 1852, the family were brought up in relative poverty and Annie was looked after by a friend of the family Ellen Marryat. This enabled Annie Besant to gain a good education and travel around Europe. In 1867, aged only 19, she married a clergyman, Frank Besant, and they had two children. However, Annie's increasingly unconventional religious views led to their legal separation in 1873. She then became a prominent speaker for the National Secular Society (NSS). She was also a women's rights activist, educationalist and philanthropist. Regarded as a champion of human freedom, she was an ardent supporter of both Irish and Indian self-rule. She was a prolific author with over three hundred books

pamphlets to her credit. As an educationalist, her contributions included being one of the founders of the Banaras Hindu University. Annie Besant, a theosophist adopted India and worked for its liberation. She was inspired by the Irish home rule movement and formed the home rule league, in India. She appointed her home rule organizing secretary was George Arundale.

⁸Ibid, p.145.

The two home rule leagues started by Tilak and Annie Besant its not merged. Because in Annie Besant words, “some of his followers disliked me and some of mine disliked him. We however, had no quarrel with each other”⁹.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

In the 1880's Besant joined the theosophical society and moved in India in 1893. The theosophical society was formed in New York, in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky and Hentry Steel Olcott in 1882, Olcott and Blavatsky moved to India and established it's international headquarters at Adayar, in Madras. Theosophical movement was revivalist in nature. Annie Besant took over the leadership of theosophical society and made it very popular in India. The early days of Annie Besant in India, she was a trade union activist⁹. Theosophical is the wisdom under lifting all religious when they are stripped of accretions and superstitions .It offers a Philosophy which renders life intelligible and demonstrates that justice and love guide the cosmos. Its teachings aid the revelation of the latent spiritual nature in the human being, without dependence on any external phenomena. Theosophy is derived from the Greek word 'theosophia' literally meaning “god's wisdom” ¹⁰. It refers to systems of esoteric philosophy concerning, or seeking direct knowledge of, presumed mysteries of being and nature, particularly concerning the nature of divinity. Its essence is in its referring to hidden knowledge or wisdom that offers the individual

enlightenment and salvation. The theosopher. Seeks to understand the mysteries of the universe and the bonds that unit the universe, humanity and the divine. The goal of theosophy is to explore the origin of divinity, humanity and the world. The theosophical society became prominent in the time Mrs. Annie Besant who joined the society in 1889 and came in Indian in 1893¹¹.

⁹ P.A. Warriar and Dr. K. Velayudhan Nair, Swathanthriathinte Katha, Kairali Childrens Book Trust, 1985.

¹⁰ibid, p.143.

¹¹ Shakeel Anwar, theosophical society : roles and features of movement in India, posted in <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/theosophical-society-roles-and-features-of-the-movement-in-india-1444625168-1>, 12 October 2015.

She dedicated her whole life to the cause of the society. According to Besant need of India among others is the development of a national spirit and education. Hence, she started on educational society to study Indian culture. The society called for universal brotherhood. The movement strengthened faith in the ancient doctrines and philosophies of Hinduism. The society conducted research on Hindu Scriptures which helped the process of intellectual awakening in India. Annie Besant also advocated the cause of female education.

Following were includes in the society agenda:

- To form nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.
- To encourage the study of comparative religion philosophy and science.
- To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and powers latent in man.

The theosophist respected all religion. They were opposed to conversation and believed transmigration of soul and Occult mysticism. Theosophical society was an integral part of the revival of Hinduism in

India which also brought about a certain degree of social solidarity. To quote Annie Besant “without Hinduism, India has no future. Hinduism is the soil into which India’s roots are struck, and torn out of that she will invincibly wither as a tree torn out of its place.”¹² The theosophists also worked for the abolition of caste, untouchability and believed in the philosophy of assimilation. They genuinely worked towards social accept ability and integration of the marginalized sections. They tried to better the conditions of the society excluded by encouraging them to take up mainstream education. In this regard, Annie Besant also set up several educational societies and propagated the need to spread modern education. As mentioned earlier Annie Besant had joined the theosophical society in 1889.

She was a firm believer in the teachings of Vedas and Upanishads. She considered the Indian soil to be liberating and enlightening at the same time that she took the nation as her own and made it her permanent abode.

¹² V.D. Mahajan, modern Indian history from 1707 to the present day, published by S. Chand and company pvt.ltd, Ram Nagar , New Delhi- 110 055,p.659-660.

She was a protestor against the prevalent evils of the then Indian society like child marriage, unacceptability of widow remarriage etc. in her attempt to bring education at every doorstep; she started the Banaras central school. It was around this very nucleus that the present Banaras Hindu University culminated. South India also saw a wave of her efforts in various school and collages being established. She also started the home rule league 1916 similar to the Irish league movement in her attempt to spread the vision of the society. She vehemently worked for; she published two journals called the “The New India” and the “Common Weal”. The theosophical movement had more appeal among intelligentsia than the masses and made its own mark in the 19th century. It came to be allied with Hindu

renaissance.

Theosophy could be established a special relationship between a person's soul and god by contemplation, prayer, revelation, etc..The society accepted the Hindu beliefs in re-incarnation, karma and drew inspiration from the philosophy of the Upanishads and Samkhya, Yoga, and Vedanta school of thoughts. It called for universal brotherhood without distinction or race, creed, sex, caste, or color. The movement aimed at the quest of the Hindu spiritual wisdom through western enlightenment. The movement revived and strengthened faith in the ancient doctrines and philosophies of the Hindus. The theosophical society had a part in the country's freedom struggle, including the formation of Indian National Congress¹³. Among the socio-religious movements the theosophical society entered first in the Malabar. In 1882the first branch of the society was organized at Palakkad or Palghat. Annie Besant defended Hinduism in its entirely philosophy, yoga, rites and rituals, ceremonies and varnashram dharma. Her aim was the spiritual revival of India as against the materialist ideas of the west being preached in India by the English educated¹⁴.

¹³ Shakeel Anwar, opsit

¹⁴ Sunil naliyath, history and culture promoting brotherhood ,
posted in
[https://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/history-and-culture/
promoting- brotherhood/article5325682.ece ,07](https://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/history-and-culture/promoting- brotherhood/article5325682.ece ,07) November 2013.

Her enthusiastic preaching strengthened Hindus pride in their religion and culture was severely criticized and condemned by European missionaries. The educated youth of India face an identity crisis turned to theosophical society as it was an organization promoted by westerners upholding the virtues of Hinduism. In Malabar also the

missionary attacks on Hinduism was resisted by theosophists. The approach of the theosophist to pollution and purity was well articulated by Mrs. Besant in her speech delivered at the Madras provincial conference, of 1918. She said that, a Panchama became touchable when his life was uplifted. She also argued for more active and widespread efforts in the direction of educating the depressed classes by affording greater facilities for the education of these classes and by creating a public feeling against the gross and unfair notion regarding them as untouchables. Inspired by these words the theosophists of Malabar organized programs for upliftment of the depressed classes¹⁵. They started a school for the panchamas at palaghat. Besant also criticized the double dealings of Hindus towards they depressed class.

The elite among the polluting castes of Malabar, especially the Tiya elite, co-operated with the theosophists in the movement for ensuring them social justice. But they were suspicious about the home rule movement organized by Mrs. Besant and the theosophists. The influence of theosophical society was limited to the elites of the Malabar society. Even in their mishrabhojanam only the educated Tiyas participated. The depressed classes, “being ‘unclean’ and ‘touchable’ only when his life was uplifted”; were not admitted intercaste dining or other activities. Though it was a pioneering attempt, it also shows the limitation of the reform activities undertaken by the theosophical society.

¹⁵ Dr. P.M. Ismael, Quest for Social Justice: MALABAR (1882 -1947), G.V.Books, (Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY),2009, P.93.

As mentioned earlier there were two home rule movement launched. Tilak launched the Indian home rule league in April 1916 at Belgaum ; Annie Besant launched the home rule league in September 1916 at Madras. They had a common objective to achieving self – government in India. The home rule league functioned through the year as opposed to the congress party whose activities are continued to once a year. The movement was able to garner a huge support from a lot of educated Indians. In 1917, the two leagues combined and had around 40,000 members.¹⁶ Many members of the congress and the Muslim league joined the league. The moderates , extremists and Muslim league were united through the home rule league. The movement was able to spread political consciousness to more religious in the country. Later this movement influenced many likeminded educate youth and they also began to propagate its ideas in different parts of the country. It branches were established at Bombay, Kanpur, Allahabad, Banaras, Madura, and Ahmednagar. Once such movement was also started at Calicut in Kerala under the leadership of many eminent leaders and Mnajery Rama Iyer was the prominent among them. The next chapter is a detailed study of Manjery Rama Iyer early political career and activities.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.96

CHAPTER - 2

MANJERY RAMA IYER EARLY POLITICAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES

The early decades of the twentieth century produced many social reformers in Kozhikode city. However many of them knowingly or unknowingly ignored or failed to get due attention. Manjeri Rama Iyer is one among the doyens of yesterdays, who is widely ignored in the annals of history barring a few mentions. May be mainly because he supported and promoted the aspirations of lower castes of Malabar. In fact, there is not even a biography written about him to date while lesser mortals have voluminous books written, detailing their smaller claims to fame.

Manjeri Rama Iyer was a lawyer, social worker and founder of theosophical society in Calicut and a politician of Malabar. He was born on July 5, 1877 to Sundaram Iyer and Lakshmi Ammal. He passed his matriculation and FA with distinction from Manjeri and went on to do his BA in Madras Christian College, passing in 1896 and later, his Bachelors in Law in 1898. At the turn of the century he returned to Calicut, beginning to make a decent living as a well known criminal advocate.

As we know, in the 20th century the leaders in the North were clamoring for home rule and self-governance. Dr. Annie Besant, who in connection with the theosophical society, came to Adayar in the Tamil Nadu in 1896, soon shifted to Kozhikode. People like Manjeri Rama Iyer and many other Malabar Nationalists who were part of the Malabar Congress Committee, took it up seriously. At Calicut, Rama Iyer emerged the fiercest proponent for the Home Rule League. Rama Iyer soon became the president of the home rule league in Malabar while K.P.Kesava Menon worked as its secretary. He championed it vigorously, spearheading the local chapter of the 27,000 members

working for fruition of Besant's vision. Perhaps he too stood at the town hall of Mananchira, corners exhorting people to support self-rule not only were self-rule aspects discussed, but also other issues such as sanitation, elementary education for all etc. He spread Besant's ideology and the Mangalore theosophical society owes its success to Margaret Cousins and Manjeri Rama Iyer .

He was also a good orator. An example of his oratory and conviction can be seen in this simple utterance the precondition for home rule, delivered in the 1917 Calcutta annual convention thus : "This resolution calls for social freedom by which we shall shatter the shackles that bind the lower classes. They are the foot of the nation and if you and I would climb the hill of home rule, we must shatter the shackles on our feet and then only will home rule come to us cannot be political democrats and at the same time social autocrats. Remember that a man, a social slave, cannot be politically a free man. We all have come here to see the vision of united India not only politically united but united all along the line. There let those of us, who are Brahmins, who belong to the higher castes, go to our village and shatter the shackles of the low castes, people who are struggling against our own men, the social bureaucrats of our own land"¹ .

RAMA IYER AS A POLITICAL ACTIVIST

Rama Iyer was not just a supporter of the Hindu downtrodden, but also the affected Mappila. The Mappila Muslims were subjected to extreme tortures under the British military expansions to Malabar in the early 1900's². The situation became ominous by the 1920's, it was a period when Malabar riot started the forward march of national movement. Manjeri Rama Iyer , a well renowned advocate of then Malabar was found saying, " There were no provisions to win bail for a detained Mappila Muslim. No recommendations worked out in favour of him. None among the witnesses dared to give statements in favour of a Mappila Muslim, while they were trailed under riot charges by the British when somebody came up to give statements in favour of the Mappila Muslim detained under trial, he too was made a culprit under similar charges. Once the Mappila Muslim gets detained under riot

charges, he was obliged to prove his innocence on his own rather than one's making accusations proving him guilty"³.

¹speech of Manjery Rama Iyer, Calcutta annual convention, 1917

² Abdul Basith, Republic Day: few historical Muslim perspectives from Kerala,

http://twocircles.net/2013jan26/republic_day_few_historical_muslim_perspectives_ke_rala.html, 26 January 2013.

³ A.K Pilla, Keralavum Congressum(Manjeri Rama Iyer words)

Kerala Muslims were not second to anybody else with regards to their desire for freedom, patriotism and sacrificing mentality. The rulers and the vested interested parties try to propagate the message that all works of congress will end only in massacre. As a leader of home rule league, Mnajeri Rama Iyer reacted strongly by starting that the sword that was used to cut human throats in Eranad was to be in fact direct against Mahatma Gandhi and Khilafath leader Shaukat Ali. I am also says that Manjeri Rama Iyer was not just a supporter of the Hindu downtrodden but also affected moplach. Moorkoth Kumaran was another personality whose spoke against national movement.

Moorkoth Kumaran picked this name up from a speech of Gopalakrishna Gokale. He was a social reformer, a teacher and a prominent short story writer in Malayalam. He was the second S.N.D.P Yogam General Secretary. He was a disciple of Narayana Guru and he wrote the first biography of Guru. Mitavadi or 'moderate advocates', a weekly - hand written pamphlet airing such matters was started in 1907 from Tellicherry by Moorkoth Kumaran but was later shifted to Calicut (Kumaran resigned owing to a silly fight with SivaSankaran - an event which was a tragic loss to literature and an active press.)to become first a magazine and later a daily, by Krishnan Vakeel. The articles of C.V. Kunhiraman, Manjeri Rama Iyer, Ramavarma Thampan, Mooliyayal kesavan and so on figured prominently own the pages of Mithavadi. Moorkoth Kumaran used to wonder that what will happened it British say good bye to this not know anything Congress is an organization of the upper classes and Nairs are at its helm. It was though his 'Gajakesari' paper that Kumaran made his anti- congress stand.

Meanwhile, created a gap between the supporters of Montague political reforms and its opponents. The former, the included Rama Iyer were for home rule and the latter full independence. The cracks were evident in a of strident speeches by Rama Iyer and During 1928, the Simon commission was boycotted in Malabar to boycott it. The in Hall Calicut, and Dr. Annie and conducted a hartal Menon, Manjeri Rama Menon, P. propaganda as the

resort

was stated to be

Latter Manjeri Rama Iyer the boycott of Foreign cloths. The result of a long historic process. It various occasions and passed through different stages. A movement of nationalism occurred with the movement in Bengal against the province. The call to boycott Foreign goods and patronize Indian of spread to other places. The word Swaraj (self rule), Swadesi (one who reside in one's own home land, *desa*) and Swathantryam (independence) resounded all over the country. 1930 Rama Iyer left congress and in the Payyanur conference even opposed Nehru's resolution of 'purna swaraj'. But all the while he remained as a theosophist.

Rama Iyer and Yuvak Sangh

Manjeri Rama Iyer took the initiative in promoting Khadi and the boycott of foreign cloths. On 9th November 1929 the Kerala Yuvak Sangh was organized at Calicut with Manjeri Rama Iyer as president. The sangh was to carry on active propaganda for donning Khadi, prohibition of liquor and starting again the traditional kalari system⁴. During the eve of the civil disobedience movement of 1930 the major role played for the agitation by the

youth of yuvak sangh under the leadership of Manjeri Rama Iyer. Yuvak sangh played a major role in Kerala freedom struggle; it also strengthen the feeling of nationalism in kerala peoples. As expected, the organization was declared unlawful through a notification in the Fort St. George Gazette in 1932. Meanwhile, Rama Iyer continued on with his work to spread Besant ideology.

Rama Iyer and Home Rule Agitation

At a meeting in Madurai in February 1978, George Joseph commented that for achieving Home Rule, people should agitate within India and recommended that representatives be sent to England to demand self- government for India. George Joseph was one of the three members of the first batch of Home Rule Deputation. B.V. Narasimha Iyer were the other members accompanying George Joseph to London.

⁴Dr. Rani S Pillai, article of the book, Faces of social reform in Kerala, p.122.

This deputation set out for England in two bathes on 10th March and 18th March 1918 before reaching London, they had a halt at Gibrattar. At Gibrattar, their passports were seized and cancelled by the British, so they had to turn back to India⁵.

I am already says that in connection with the visit of the Simon Commission in 1928, a meeting was held in Malabar to boycott it. The Malabar Conference held at the Town Hall Calicut exhorted the people to object and conduct a hartal.

When the commission landed in Bombay on February 3, 1928, a successful hartal was observed in Malabar, as in other parts of India under the leadership of P.K. Kunjisankara Menon, Manjeri Rama Iyer, K. Madhavan Nair, P. Ramunni Menon, U. Gopala Menon, P. Achuthan and K. Madava Menon. Students abstained from attending the class, lawyers did not turn up at the courts, shops were closed and black flags fluttered everywhere. At various public meetings resolutions were passed

protesting against the Simon Commission's visit⁶. It was stated to be a Success.

Principles of theosophy started by Madme Blavatsky, the Russian émigré and propounded by Annie Besant from Madras were influencing they educated masses enmasse. While V.K. Krishna Menon embraced it at Tellichery and headed on Madras living Malabar for good, people like Manjeri Rama Iyer and many other Malabar nationalist who were part of the Malabar congress committee, took it up seriously. C . Sankaran Nair, G Parameswaran Pillai and doctor T.M. Nair were also among those who took up the cudgels in addition to congress political activities and rose against Brahmin and upper cast issues plaguing Malabar then. At Calicut, the Tilak brand of home rule did not find favour and after 1915, Rama Iyer was the fiercest proponent for the Besantine Home Rule League. Rama Iyer soon became the president of the home rule league in Malabar while K.P. Keshava Menon its secretary.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 121.

⁶ *ibid*, p.121.

K.P. KESAVA MENON

K.P Kesavaenon Menon was born in 1886 in Tharoor village of Palaghat. After his education, he became the secretary of Malabar Home Rule League. He joined the Indian National Congress in 1915 and served as the secretary of the Malabar branch of the home rule league after setting up practice in Calicut. He was a member of the home rule league under Annie Besant which protected to London to present a memorandum to the secretary of state in 1917. He was a patriot, idealist, journalist and Indian independence activist. In 1921 K.P. Kesava Menon joined the Non-cooperation movement after after giving up practice. He did relief work as secretary of KPCC during Moplah rebellion. He praised Moplah for their enthusiasm to join the Khilafat Movement and congress committees during the pre-rebellion days, he also provided a critical account of the forced conversion of a Thiyya woman of Nilambur in the note, 'forced conversion, the Calicut case', published on July 6, 1922. He was known as the grand old man of Kerala. Kesava Menon served as the editor of the 'mathrubumi' till his death on November 9, 1978. With the centenary of the historic second Malabar district conference round the corner, historians of Calicut university have, unearthed important documents removing the obscurities over the conference held in Kozhikode in 1917⁷.

There has been vagueness about the district conference held on April 23 and 24, 1917, in Kozhikode over which C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer had presided. Originally planned at Mananchira Grounds, the conference had assumed nation-wide significance as it was shifted to the Tennis Court of K.P. Raman Menon after the British collector denied permission for it. Taking inspiration from the historic Tennis Court oath of the French Revolution, many youngsters joined the historic conference held at Tennis Court. The Tennis Court Conference of Indian history had witnessed the beginning of a political renaissance in Kerala, apart from several events such as inter-caste mass dining it also saw the political debate of freedom fighters such as Moyyarth Sankaran, M.P. Narayana Menon, K. Madhavan Nair and K.P.Kesava

Menon.

7 Abdul Latheef Naha, An historic event rises from obscurity, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/an-historic-event-rises-from-obscurity/article17362308.ece> , Malppuram 24 February 2017.

Several leaders such as, Annie Besant and Manjeri Rama Iyer had attended the conference⁸. Growing anti-colonial sentiments and the visit of national leaders brought the growing national sentiment to the people of Kerala. Annie Besant started a concentrated political work in India with her Home Rule Movement. It got enthusiastic support all over the country. She visited Kerala several times to organize the movement. During the First World War when she was put under house arrest, the nation-wide agitation to get her released evoked much response in Malabar. Thus the people became more and more confident in their political work. Now they could understand for the first time what they had only heard or read about before and thus were brought into the main stream of the national movement. National Movement gathered momentum in Kerala also. The Home Rule League was formed in 1916 and extensive discussions in the Lucknow Congress held in the same year resulted in the Political pact between the Muslim League and the Congress. This helped to form a home rule league in Kerala. In 1916 May, under the presidentship of Smt. Annie Besant a political meeting was held. That was the first meeting of the District Committee of the Congress. In the beginning only the Janmis and members of the congress. They used to have high amount of dedication and obligation to the British Government.

Malabar was the nerve center of national movement in Kerala. In Malabar, the organized political activities began only the second decade of the 20th century. Home rule movement started 1916 by the leadership of Annie Basant and Lokamanya Tilak. The organized political activity motivated by nationalist sentiments started in Malabar only with the home rule movement. Branch of home rule league at Calicut with Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer as president and K.P. Kesava Menon as secretary. The movement attracted a large number of students and youth in 1916, collector Innes organized a meeting at

Calicut for raising funds for war, but he prevented K.P. Kesava Menon to speak in Malayalam, showed the tempo of rising national movement. The arrest of Dr. Annie Basant by the middle of 1917 greatly excited the national consciousness of the people of Malabar.

8 ibid

Malabar Congress held annual conference passing various resolutions like;

1. 1916 -At Palaghat- Presided by Annie Basant
2. 1917 -At Kozhikode -Presided by sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer
3. 1918- At Thalassery - Presided by Mir Asad Ali Khan
4. 1919-At Vadakara - Presided by K.P. Raman Menon

I am also says that Malabar was the nerve center of national movement in Kerala. People in Malabar very much watchful and influenced by the political developments outside. The growth of Indian National Congress and its political activities were represented in Malabar by the educated middle classes. The activities of these educated middle classes under the banner of the Indian National Congress united the people of Malabar against the British rule. K. Madhavan Nair was the most prominent of such early freedom fighters of Kerala. He had close connections with K.P. Kesava Menon, C. Krishnan, Manjeri Rama Iyer and C Achuthan they were greatly influenced his later.

Manjeri Rama Iyer was a close companion of Home Rule Movement of Mrs. Annie Besant and Madavan Nair was also, in the early period of his political career was closely associated with the Home Rule League and Madhavan Nair became an active congress worker. But in the early phase, he was behind K.P. Kesava Menon and other not in the forefront. He was not in front of the first four political conferences. The fifth Kerala political conference held at Manjeri with Nilambur Manavedan Thirumulpad as the president of the organizing committee.A.K Pilla in his 'Congressum Keralavum' mentioned this conference as the transformation phase of kerala politics. Madhavan Nair was the forefront of the conference along with K.P. Kesava Menon and Manjeri Rama Iyer.

The important step taken by the congress committee during the period was the formation of the Malabar District Congress Committee in 1910 Mr. Kunhirama menon was its first secretary. The main purpose of the meeting of the District Congress Committee was mostly to elect a few delegates to attend the sessions of the Indian National Congress. The political conference held at Calicut In 1913 under the presidentship of C. Vijayaragavacharier was successful to some extend in creating political awareness among the people.

The home rule movement that began in 1916 under the leadership of Dr. Annie Basant and Lokamanya Tilak evoked positive responses in Malabar. The organized political activity motivated by nationalist sentiments started in Malabar only with the home rule movement. A branch of the home rule league was formed in Calicut with Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer as president and K.P. Kesava Menon as secretary.

The District Home Rule League and District Congress Committee worked jointly under the leadership of K.P. Kesava Menon. The movement attracted a large number of students and youth under the auspices of the Home Rule League and District Congress Committee several meetings and processions were organized in various parts of Malabar. In 1916, the Calicut Municipal Chairman convened a public meeting at the Town Hall, to get the support of the natives of Britain in the first world war. When Kesava Menon, the District Congress Secretary began to speak in Malayalam, the district collector, asked him to speak in English. Kesava Menon stopped his speech, protested and boycotted the meeting. The majority of the audience followed him, leaving the collector and a few officials there in the hall. This was sometimes the first public protest against British government in Malabar.

The activities of the national movement gathered momentum with the formation of the District Committee of the home rule league in 1916, with its headquarters at Calicut, Manjeri Rama Iyer as the president and K.P. Kesava Menon as the secretary. K.P. Kesava Menon worked home rule league under congress committee. His political activities caused a great stir all over the Malabar district. 1916 Malabar District Congress Committee was reconstituted with K.P. Raman Menon and secretary respectively. Kesava Menon acted as the secretary of both congress and home rule league, more and more people began to join in the national movement. Both this organization worked for independence.

Iyer was not just a supporter of the Hindu downtrodden, but also the affected Mappila. The Mappila Muslims were subjected to extreme tortures under the British military expansions to Malabar in the early

1900's. The situation became ominous by the 1920's. It was a period when Malabar riots startled the forward march of national movement. The rulers and the vested interested parties tried to propagate the message that all works of congress will end only in massacre. The leader of the home rule league Manjeri Rama Iyer reacted strongly by stating that thus sword that was used to cut human throats in Eranad was to be in fact directed against Mahatma Gandhi and Khilafat leader Shaukath Ali. Manjeri Rama Iyer as a well renowned advocate of then Malabar said "there were no provisions to win bail for a detained Mappila Muslim"⁹. No recommendations worked out in favour of him.

⁹ Dr. Rani S Pillai, *ibid* p.121.

None among the witnesses dared to give statements in favour of a Mappila Muslim, while they were trailed under riot charges by the British¹⁰. When somebody came up to give statements in favour of the Mappilla Muslim detained under trial he too was made a culprit under similar charges, he was obliged to prove his innocent own his own rather than the one's making accusations proving him guilty. In the first world war Turkey was on the side of Germany, it against British. When the war over with the victory of British, Turkish empire was divided and deliberately tampered the powers and rights of the Caliph. Caliph is the spiritual leader of the Muslims all over the world. The Indian Muslims started the Khilafat movement demanding reinstatement of the Caliph with all his erstwhile powers and rights. The Khilafat agitation was supported by the congress, at the last political conference was held at Manjeri in April, 1920. This conference discussed mainly three important issues and they were given below;

- The problems of tenants.
- Administrative reforms.
- Khilafat movement and requested.

The government to reinstate caliph in Turkey. I was opposed by the moderates led by Manjeri Rama Iyer and Anie Basant. In the cause of time Manjeri Raam Iyer formally left his political activities and he is very much

influenced by Buddhism and became a Buddhist . M. T. Vasudevan Nair, who was a tutor at M.B. tutorial collage which was held at Annie Hall, B.P. Muhammed, N.N. Kakkad, Pattathuvila Karunakaran and M.V. Devan were regular visitors. Inspite of the above mentioned descriptions, Manjeri Rama Iyer rendered many contributions for the freedom of our country in general and for the eradication of different social evils prevailed in Kerala society in particular. The next chapter entitled "Manjery Rama Iyer a socio- theosophical activists" is a detailed description of the role played by Manjeri Rama Iyer both as a theosophist and as a social reformer.

¹⁰ ibid p.121

CHAPTER 3

MANJERI RAMA IYER AS A THEOSOPHIST AND SOCIAL ACTIVISTS

The structural transformation that took place in the Malabar society under colonial regime brought to the forefront new ideologies, institutions and practices. Values in conflict with Brahminical world began to emerge by the closing decades of the 19th century. Socio-religious reform movement organized in other part of India made their entry into Malabar in this traditional face of its history and culture. The powerful activities inaugurated by the elite of Kerala also worked in the activities of these movements in the socio- cultural spectrum of Malabar helps as to locate their role in upholding human dignity and social justice. Society and the religion of our country had passed

through numerous phases of change. The inequality and evils involved in the socio-structure attracted the attention of intellectual and reformer through out the history of mankind¹. Great historical movement has been accelerated by extra ordinary individuals involved in unique evens. These reformers sacrificed their life for transforming the society.

In our country, we have often had several movements occurring simultaneously in different religions affecting different segments of society. The movements were collective at tempts to bring about social change to create / preserve new social orders². When the structure of a social entity is transformed for any reason, the ideology is also affected. All human thinking and action is determined social forces³.

¹V.N. Sujaya, Social and religious transformation of Kerala with special reference to Brahmananda Sivayogi, <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/2580> , 15- 01-2010, p 50.

² ibid p.6

³ ibid p. 6

Social institutions are created historically and developed historically, but they are constantly tested by socialization when they will be taken over and legitimated by new generations⁴. Consecutively institutions are created society could be conceived as a social system made up of a number of mutually dependent components that exist in a relative equilibrium. Changes in one part may necessarily lead to changes in other parts. The totality of change, more often than note, tends to be gradual or incremental.

Generally, societies change by evolutionary or revolutionary force or at times by means of both. This social revolution denotes the sudden or abrupt change in the customs, behavioral patterns, values etc. of a society. In this process the beliefs, attitudes and habits of the general public are completely changed. The entire social structure or organization undergoes considerable change and modification as a

result of which the pattern of social institutions, classes, states and creations etc. are greatly changed. Change is real and inevitable. The 19th and early 20th century was a great turning period which changed the face of Kerala far more than did the preceding thousand years.

A new era set in Kerala which witnessed the emergence of the society quite different Kerala experienced and intellectual revolution or renaissance during this period which totally changed the outlook of the people. Religious, cultural and ideological as well as economic issues lead to important dimensions and conflict in the social order. This period witnessed the formation of a consciousness about identity of Kerala in all areas of social endeavor ⁵. The nature, direction and momentum of these changes constitute the basis for the introduction of an alternative system of beliefs and re- structure of social institution. Kerala experienced a structural transformation. This can be attributed to the culmination of social factors in social movements. These movements were basically reformatory in nature and proved to be an onward rationalist movement. They were in fact a gradual evolution culminating, in the national movement for independence.

During the colonial rule, Kerala society experienced a social transformation. Western education, capitalism, change in land ownership patterns, creation of legal institutions introduced a change in the outlook of people. Many intellectuals to emerged on the scene⁶.

⁴ Heine Anderson and Lars Bo Kaperson, eds classical and modern theory , 2000, Malden in USA, p 185.

⁵ V.N. Sujaya, ibid p.7

⁶ ibid p.8

Among this a prominent personality is Manjeri Rama Iyer. Manjeri Rama Iyer was a theosophist and was a social reformer affecting common man and woman⁷. He was also among those who took up the cudgels in addition to congress political activities and rose against the Brahmin and upper caste issue plaguing Malabar then. Exhorting people to think rationally and propounding Vivekananda's Teachings, Rama Iyer took on Bhudhism and became a theosophist. The work done by theosophist and theosophical society is in India. Many theosophists were involved not in speculation of what is going on in unseen world and outside of things, but were active in improving the

conditions of the masses.

Manjeri Rama Iyer as a Social Reformer

As mentioned earlier Raam Iyer was a not just a freedom fighter, fighting for Indian freedom from the British, but was above all one who helped large masses of people in Malaabr and Kerala obtained freedom from the many social evils of that time. As we know, Kerala known to have practiced the most extreme forms of untouchability compared to other parts of India. The early decades of the 20th century; there was no equality the caste rigors were stringent and the Mappila unrest at its Nadir. Though there emerged reformation movements against such social evils, most were suppressed by force and resistance and often lacked mass support as the Indian National Congress (INC), took least care to resist such social events.

The INC, then not just a political party and instead having mass support and credibility as a national movement was able to take up untouchability as a major topic of discussion only in the 1923 Kakinada session of Indian National Congress. The Annie Besant group under Rama Iyer however, in the true spirit of a theosophist participated in many activities designed to highlight such problems and bring warring factions together. The articles of Manjeri Rama Iyer, among other leaders figured prominently on the pages of 'mithavadi' or 'moderate advocates', a weekly- hand written pamphlet airing such matters was started in 1907 from Tellicherry by Moorkoth Kumaran. He campaigned vigorously against untouchability through its columns.

7 Dr. Rani S Pillai, *ibid* p.122.

In the traditional Malabar society large majority of people, who are now designated as Hindus, were polluting cast. This has been attested by colonial administrative reports, foreign travel accounts and indigenous sources. The dividing line between the two section of cast and non cast people polluted and the polluting was drawn in such a manner in which the Nairs and those above them in the ritual hierarchy were treated as cast Hindus and those below including Tiyas and the depressed classes as polluting castes.

The structural transformation that took place in the Malabar society under colonial regime brought to the forefront new ideologies, institutions and practices. Values in conflict with brahmanical world view began to emerge by the closing decades of the 19th century. Socio-religious reform movements originated in other parts of India made their entry into Malabar in this transitional phase of its history and culture. The powerful reform activities inaugurated by elites of Kerala also worked in the direction of socio-religious and cultural transformation. An analysis of the activities of these movements in the socio-cultural spectrum of Malabar helps us to locate their role in upholding human dignity and social justice.

In Malabar also, as elsewhere in India colonial modernity found its early admirers and adherents among the cast Hindus. The educated section among them developed a rich tradition of discourse with the new system. Manjeri Rama Iyer's efforts since 1911, he was joined by an equally famous character named Mithavadi C. Krishnan was a High Court lawyer, a journalist, an editor, a banker, a social revolutionary, a rationalist, Neo Buddhist Missionary and much more. He brought Mithavadi journal and press in 1913 from Sivasankaran of Talassery which was in crisis and developed it into a news daily of Avarnas and Thiya in particular from Calicut. He used the breaks provided by English education and colonial legal system for the liberation of his fellow untouchables through his pen, press and platforms. Manjeri Rama Iyer and C. Krishnan started a struggle against child marriage, untouchability and many other social evils present then and even created the league of liberal Brahmins or the

Bharat Samaj. The biggest issues in those days was getting people to unite in the midst of caste inequalities. He and his fellow comrades traveled in the company of polluting caste, attended their marriage ceremonies. In favour of the freedom movement of the low caste sections of the society. Panthibhojanam or mistrabhojanam too was conducted

for the low caste people, at Besant Ashram in Calicut⁸. Manjeri Rama Iyer, who for his affinity towards downtrodden and the low caste, faced the wrath of his own community. Social reformer Sahodaran Ayyappan made a powerful statement against caste system in Kerala bringing together members of various castes, including his own Ezhava community, for an inter-caste panthibhojanam (community feast). He was conducted the first panthibhojanam. In the panthibhojanam, rice along with a side dish made of jackfruit seeds and a chickpeas was served⁹. A pulayar(a Dalit caste) named Ayyar who is from Pallipuram served the food. He was already scheduled to do so. Ayyar had come along with his son.

But since the number of people participating had grown much beyond what they expected, everyone got a small amount of food. In the middle of the crowd Ayyar's son was made to sit. When the child had mixed the rice and the curry, everyone tasted a mouthful from his plate, and that was the famous 'Misrabhojanam' (also called Panthibhojanam). May- 30- 2017, celebrating the 100 years anniversary of the Panthibhojanam, Kerala Chief Minister Pinaray Vijayan, opposition leader Remesh Chennithala, and many other dignitaries gathered at Thundidaparambu to have another community lunch together. Sahodaran Ayyappan's daughter Aisha Gopalakrishnan was also a guest at the event.

In 1914, Besant organized a group of people called 'Stalwarts' to fight against the inequalities in society. The society organized 'Misrabhojanam' or 'Inter dining' at its auditorium 'Annie Hall' in Calicut. For eating and living with untouchables, Manjeri Rama Iyer was soon outcasted from his own community. However, he never bothered about it and he continued with his social work at Besant Ashram till his death in 1958.

⁸ Dr. Rani S Pillai, p 122.

⁹TNM staff, <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/100-years-after-historic-anti-caste-panthibhojanam-kerala-leaders-come-together-recreate>, May-31-2017.

Calicut Bar Association

Calicut Bar Association started in 1886 as a Law Library, formed under the then District Judge Mr. Frank H. Wilkinson. In 1925, it was the turn of the Calicut Bar Mr. Raman Menon to sit in the president's chair, aided by Mr. K. Karunakaran Nair as secretary. Thence onwards Calicut Bar's history continued to be epoch making, with all celebrities of the Bar adorning the presidentship. The noteworthy change brought about was that it became a body exclusively of lawyers and it came to be known as Calicut Bar Association. Most of the members were not sheer Advocates, bent upon only on their lucrative practice, but they were forerunners in all great moments of history, freedom struggle to struggle to retain freedom. Politics, culture, arts, science, spirituality and even commerce were not alien to us and we did take the lead in all those spheres of human action.

Doyens like Manjeri Rama Iyer, U Gopala Menon, K. G. Nair, K.V. Suryanarayana Iyer, K.P. Kesava Menon, K. Madhavan Nair, S.K. Khader, and justice not only in courts but outside in society too. They built the glorious tradition on which this association's base rests.

Tali Temple Entry Movement

The next action in which Rama Iyer actively participated was the well-published Tali Temple entry. The Siva Temple or 'Talimahashethram' is a Hindu temple dedicated to the deity Lord Shiva, situated in the heart of the

Kozhikode city. One of the most famous temple in Kozhikode is Tali temple. It exactly situated at Tali, near Palayam, walkable distance from Kozhikode railway station. The temple was built in the 14th century by swami Thirumulpadu, Zamorin of Calicut. The temple is very beautiful temple, its dedicated to Lord Siva. The temple built in Kerala style architecture.

It is a very oldest temple. The temple had a specialty the deity here is blended from of goddess Uma and Lord Shiva. It is known as Uma Maheswara. The founding and prosperity of Kozhikode city is closely linked with the sanctity of this ancient temple .It is believed that the lingam in the sanctum of the temple was installed towards the end of Dvapara Yuga by Sri. Parasurama. The posture in the sanctum is that of Uma Maheswara. Though this divine power existed from time in memorial, the attention of the citizens of Kozhikode was only by about 1500 years ago. Later on the temple reached its zenith during the rule of the zamorin of Calicut.

Tali temple was famous for 'Revathipattanam' , an annual statesman gathering in period of king zamorin. During the early days of lower caste were prohibited from walking the public roads leading to the Tali temple stating that their entry well the place polluting. On 1st November 1917, with this authority Throne had two notice boards installed on the Talisamooham road announcing ' no passage of lower communities'. The notice said: "since the untouchables like, Thiyyas, walking along the steps of this temple and is against civility, the above community should not use those roads hence towards, and his hereby informed that those who breach the notice would responsible for all expenses incurrence to the temple and would be punished as per law".

In this regard of rejecting such beliefs as superstition and underground the nationalist appealed to the elites to open all public roads to the lower castes. To break the existing elites conventions the national leaders like K.P. Kesava Menon and Manjeri Rama Iyer enough to joint hands with C.Krishnan in difining the order. The new zamorin's manager J .C. Throne had earlier forwarded to the District Collector F.B. Evans, a memorandum signed by more than a hudred upper caste persons requesting him to prevent the lower communities from using the Tali temple roads.Evans did not accept the petition and went on leave for two months, but coincidentily J.C thorne was appointed as acting collector. Manjeri Rama Iyer did not waste any time in reaching in this law and so he and his Thiyya friend C. Krishnan travelled along

the Tali road in a horse cart on the same day when the board appeared.

As mentioned earlier a notice board was hoisted in the Talisamooham road , after this action Manjeri Rama Iyer wrote a letter to Throne, “since your notice limits the rights of a major section of the subjects of his majesty the emperor, we have immediately utilized our right by walking along the Padinjare sammoham in your notice. We would be thankful to you take immediate action in the case of violation of law”¹⁰.

Neither the zamorin nor Throne reacted strongly, they thanked Iyer for his letter and the matter was judicially dropped while the Thiyyas celebrated their success, however, the Act did not result in any great change other than bringing larger awareness¹¹. It encouraged common people to be dare enough to walk through the road near Tali temple and even remove the board on the road prohibited the lower castes entry and important consequence of the Tali road agitation was that it inspired untouchables from other parts of Malabar to initiated similar movement.

¹⁰manjeri Rama Iyer own words.

¹¹ Manjeri Rama Iyer - a social worker A social worker and freedom fighter, category : Malabar History, personalities – Maddy @ Friday , June 20, 2014.

Cholappuram Agitation

The next intervention of Manjeri Rama Iyer was that of Cholapuram agitation. The low caste people were prohibited from drawing water from the Cholapuram temple as a part of untouchability violate this, Rama Iyer walking along the temple road and draw water from the tank. He walked along the temple tank near Cholapuram in 1919 along with Dr. K.V. Choi, a Thiyya by caste¹². C. krishanan extended open support to Dr. Choi and Rama iyer for such a brave act. The temple authority got irritated because of this violation, and they filed a criminal case against Choi in the sub magistrate’s court, at Calicut . As a sensational case of pollution, this was the first case of its

kind in Malabar, it reported new India of 22nd February 1919. C. Krishnan recommended that Choi request his close friend Manjeri Rama Iyer's help and Iyer defended Dr. Choi to win the case.

Manjeri Rama Iyer, an Activist and Theosophist in India

Manjeri Rama Iyer was a theosophist and was an activist in social reforms affecting the common and woman. The theosophical society founded by Madme Blavatsky and Colonel H.S. Olcott Became an influential socio-religious reform movement in South India under the energetic leadership of Mrs. Annie Besant. Among the socio- religious movements of the theosophical society entered first in Malabar. In 1882 the first branch of the Society was organized at Palaghat¹³. Another branch was opened at Tirur in 1884. In between 1902 and 1904 its activities spread to Badagra, Calicut, Manjeri, Nilambur, Ponnani, Alathur, Ottapalam and Chittoor. The branches at Tellichery, Badagara, Calicut, Kannur and Chowa functioned well and other branches ceased to exist¹⁴.

¹² Dr. Rani S Pillai, op.sit p.123.

¹³ M.K. Sivaraman, "A short history of Kerala Theosophical Federation" in the souvenir of Kerala Theosophical Federation Retention Platinum Jubilee Celebration, Kozhikode 1986.

¹⁴ibid

Theosophical society was a spiritual movement aimed at the revival of Hinduism. It preached universal brotherhood of man, irrespective of the distinction of caste, creed, race or sex¹⁵. In India, Mrs. Annie Besant was the chief exponent of the theosophical society. She defended Hinduism in its entirety-philosophy, Yoga, rites and rituals, ceremonies and Varnasram Dharma¹⁶. The theosophists' emphasis on human brotherhood irrespective of caste attracted the educated people including the Avarna elites to it. The Tiya

leaders like C. Krishnan, Murkooth Kumaran, Rarichan Moopan and Kottiate Ramunni co-operated with its activities. Kurumathur Parameswaran nambudiripad, E.B. Hill, V.Moidu Sahib, S. V. Samual, A.C. Kannan Nambiar, Srimathi Narayani Kettilamma, Eralpad Vidwan Ettan Thamburan, and Mnajeri Rama Iyer were the prominent theosophist of Malabar.

The theosophist of Malabar were in the forefront of the movement for the eradication of social evils. As mention earlier 1914 Annie Besant organized a group of people called 'Stalwarts' to fight against the inequalities based on caste, child marriage , suppression of woman and racism. The theosophist Manjeri Rama Iyer attended the marriage feast of a Tiya friend. The Brahmins who attended the function along with their family members were expelled from the community for the violation of caste rules. Mrs. Besant was very much pained by the disabilities imposed upon certain communities of Malabar. Under her able leadership, the Theosophists of Malabar supported the rights of the polluting castes as a 'shameful in' to a part of the Hindu community ; disgraced to Hindu religion.

Manjeri Rama Iyer is believed that no theosophy is greater than the work for the upliftment of the fellow human beings. A home that is 'Gurugulam' of the theosophical society and the hom rule movement in Malabar area is being given a facelift. Situated at Annie Hall road, adjacent to Annie Hall, a building that international with cubebs of history , allegorically as well as literally, Besant Ashram is the home that is being revamped. It belongs to Manjeri Rama Iyer, a doyen among the many social reformers of Kozhikode City had witnessed in the first half of the last century.

Dr. Annie Besant, who in connection with the theosophical society came to Adayar, Tamil Nadu in 1896 soon shifted to Kozhikode. The activities of Brahma Vidhyasangam (Theosophical Society) commenced at the Ashoka-Shankara lodge built adjacent his home by the society's follower Manjeri Rama Iyer, along with his colleague Bamblasserri Ravunni Menon.

¹⁵A.R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Bombay, 1990, p.294.

¹⁶ S. Nadarajan, A Century of Social Reform in India, Bombay, 1969, p.76.

Kallingal Madathil Rarichan Moopan, an affluent landowner and chieftain of Kozhikode that Manjeri Rama Iyer bought the land

where Annie Hall, home that later became Besant Ashram and till recently the state committee office of Mujahid centre is situated¹⁷. The Kallingal Madathil family's Kallingal Bagavathi temple, which later attained fame through K.N. Ramadas Vydiar and Nalluveedu Parambu which lay opposite and where Manjeri Rama Iyer's house was situated, were all owned by Rarichan Moopan. The house that was built for Manjeri Kamalam, famous social worker and daughter of Manjeri Rama Iyer. Rama Iyer was later bought and transformed into Mujahid center.

philosopher Jiddu Krishana Murthi's father, the her people had kidnapped Jiddu's brother Nithyanandha. It was the result of admiration and a sense of innate closeness with Dr. Besant that made Manjeri Rama Iyer name his house 'Besant Ashram' and the adjoining lodge 'Annie hall'. The municipality widened the existing narrow lane and it was renamed as 'Annie Hall Road'.

Mangalore Theosophical Society

The theosophical society is one of the most well known organization in the world. The Mangalore theosophical society is a century old now. It started by a group of enthusiastic people to make theosophy a part of life's baggage¹⁸. Its parent body, international theosophical society, was founded in New York in 1875 by Madame Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott the "inspirations of Himalayan masters". Theosophy in simple terms means divine knowledge or Brahma vidya. The society attempted to open the eyes of the people to the treasures buried in scriptures and re-establish faith in the branches in more than 50 countries. Its Indian headquarters is in Varanasi and it has a branch in Adyar, Chennai. The first visit Annie Besant, the second international president, in 1909, gave a boost to the activities of society.

¹⁷ Manjeri Rama Iyer-A social worker and freedom fighter, op.cit.

¹⁸ S. Nandagopal, Mangalore Theosophical Society turns 100 ,
[https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/mangalore-theosophical-society- turns-100/articleshow/1143523421.cms](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/mangalore-theosophical-society-turns-100/articleshow/1143523421.cms) , August -
22-2000.

The society acquired a five cent's plot at Kodialbail at the PVS Junction and constructed a modest building, consisting of a small hall, which was opened 1923. All regular activities of the society were held in the mini- hall, renamed Besant Mandhir in 1947.

Mangalore theosophical society is well over 100 years now. It was started in 1930 and was registered in 1936. Today it has nearly 70 members with a core committee of 12 regulars. There are meetings every day where members discuss many religions and hold regular talks about core values of each religion or philosophy. Theosophy in simple terms means divine knowledge or Brahma Vidya. The society attempted to open the eyes of the people to the treasures buried in scriptures and re-establish faith in the inner potential. The Mangalore Theosophical Society, for which advocate a Varada Rao gifted a site in Kodiabail Circa 1930, owes its success to Margaret Cousins and Manjeri Rama Iyer. Mangalore had the privilege of a visit from Dr. Annie Besant, the second international president of theosophical society, in 1909. Her second visit in 1918, Dr. Annie Besant laid the foundation stone for national girl's school to encourage enrolling of girls in school. Mangalore theosophists played a pioneering role in women's education .

The Besant educational institutions on M.G. Road, Kodialbail, were founded and nurtured by theosophists here. Annie Besant and her band of workers strived for rapid progress of female education by forming Balika Shikshana Sabha. Its school initially functioned from the ancestral bungalow of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. Annie Besant was an unabashed women's rights activist, socialist and Indophile. Her way to bring about something better, was to start educational institutes all over India focusing on the education of women. Mangalore boasted of one such institution in 1918 the Besant women's college, that was opened a century ago. Here Manjeri Rama Iyer also worked hard for the promotion of women education.

Manjeri Rama Iyer as a Budhologist

After a long time of Manjeri Rama Iyer political career he is very much influenced Buddha Philosophy. Buddha was the first person to question caste and Brahmanism in India in BC sixth century in North India. He was also the first thinker and social reformer to challenge the authority of the Vedas the foundational texts of Hindu Brahmanism that established the Varna caste system in the Indus and Gangetic planes soon after the devastation of the Dravidian Indus valley civilization around BC 1500. Buddhism is a set of method to live and die better. Buddhist meditation develops joy, fearlessness and compassion. It's a tradition that focuses a personal spiritual development. Buddhism largely based on original teaching attributed to the Buddha and resulting interpreted philosophies Manjeri Rama Iyer adopted Buddhism and renamed himself 'Angarikaraman'¹⁹ . His friend Mithavadi Krishnan did likewise by converting to Buddhism. Opposite to the Cabolly park, they resisted a well stocked library and a Buddha Vihara with a Buddha statue brought from Ceylon by CC Brothers. A couple of Bodhi trees and the Vihara were the hand work of Rama Iyer and Krishnan Vakeel. Govinda Menon, Ayyathan Gopalan, Appu Nedungadi (kundalatha author and Nedungadi bank founder), Manorama Kunhikrishna Menon etc. were all his friends in Calicut.

Manjeri Rama Iyer sporadically continued with journalism, writing and editing for west coast speculator and Santhana Dharma and with Manjeri Rama krishna Iyer (secretary of Buddhist theosophical league) wrote the first guid book on Buddhism called 'Buddhadharmam'. He continued with his social work until his death in 1958, aged 81. Manjeri Rama Iyer's wife was also very much involved in uplifting women's inequality matters. His children , especially his daughter Kamalamma (Kamalabal) followed his footsteps, working with Annie Besant. She was the first president of Malabar branch of the Women Indian Association. She passed away just years

after her father death. The house premises also witnessed

19 Manjeri Rama Iyer-A Social worker and Freedom Fighter. Op.cit.

the commencement of Swadeshi exhibition, the earlier from of Kozhikode Municipality's health education exhibition. The house is renowned for its affinity with many literary giants. It was during their stay here at Besant Ashram that the early works of Jnanpith Award winner M.T Vasudevan Nair, who was a tutor at MB tutorial college which was held at Annie Hall, N.P Muhammed, N.N Kakkad, Pattathuvila Karunakaran and M.V. Devan were regular visitors Manjeri Rama Iyer house.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned elsewhere, Malabar was the nerve centre of national movement in Kerala. The people of Malabar against the British rule. The freedom struggle in Malabar was more intense than in Travancore and Cochin because colonialism was deeply rooted in Malayalam. The people fell victim to both feudal oppression and colonial exploitation. The people who were suffering from the hands of British authorities and landlords participated in the national movement. Those who had gone out from Malabar brought home the message of nationalism and political awareness among the people. There are seed a number of movements on the eve of independence which contributed much for the upliftment of the society and fought for the freedom of our nation. One such movement is home rule league. People in Malabar were very much watchful of and influenced by the political developments outside. The growth of Indian national congress and its political activities were represented in Malabar by the educated middle classes. The activities of the educated middle classes under the banner of the Indian national congress united.

The home rule movement was a prominent venue that played a major role in the national freedom and Indian Independence movement. The Indian home rule movement was a movement in British India on the lines of Irish home rule movement and other home rule movements. The movement lasted around two year between 1916 -1918. Home rule league main objective that to achieve self government in India. The movement was able to spread political consciousness to more religious in the country. Later this movement influenced many likeminded educated youth and they also begun to propagate its ideas it different part of the country. One such movement was also started at Calicut in kerela under the leadership of many eminent leaders especially Manjery rama Iyer manjery rama Iyer was the president of the district home rule league movement on 9th November 1929, The Kerala yuvasangh was organized Calicut with Manjery rama Iyer as president. This organization is player an important role in Indian freedom struggle. Theosophy is the teaching about God and the world

based on mystical insight. The word theosophy combining roots meaning God and Wisdom appeared back in the 17th century. But the well known religious movement by that name

under the leadership of the Russian Helena blavatsky. The theosophical society was officially formed in New York City. Us on 17 November 1875 by Helena Blavatsky. Colonel Hendry steel olcott and others. It was self- described as “ an unsectaran body of seekers after truths, who endeavor to promote brotherhood and strive to serve humanity”.

The theosophical society initial objectives was the study and education of occultism, the cabala etc.. After a few years Olcott and Blavtsky moved to India and established the international head quarters at Adayar in Madras Annie Besant took over the leadership of theosophical society made to very popular in India. Manjeri rama Iyer was a theosophist and was an activists in social reforms affecting the common man and women. He believed that no theosophy is greater than the work for the upliftment of the fellow human beings. Besant's who in connection with the theosophical society came to Adayar, Tamil Nadu in 1896 soon shifted to Kozhikode. A special room for Dr. Annie Besant at top Manjeri Rama Iyer 's house Besant laid the foundation stone for national girls in school to encourage controlling of girls in school . Hence Mnajeri Rama Iyer also worked for the promotion of woman education.

Caste is the most general form of social organization in India. It is an integral element of Hindu life .Untouchablity, restriction on temple road and many other problems were phased the lower caste people in the society.Manjeri Rama Iyer is a social reformer and freedom fighter. He is against child marriage, untouchability and other social evils. Rama Iyer actively participated was the well-publicized, Tali temple entry. During the earlydays , lower caste was prohibited from walking the public roads leading to then the place polluting. Tali road is finally opened to the all caste of the people in initiative of C. Krishnan, Mnajeri Rama Iyer and other leaders. The lower people were prohibited to take drinking water from the Cholapuram Temple tank .

Rama Iyer and other violate this Manjeri Rama Iyer and his fellow , comrades and convened 'Misrabhojanam /Panthibhojanam' of mass lunches at Annie Hall. But for eating and living with untouchable, he was soon outcaste from his own community. After a long time of Manjeri Rama Iyer political career he is very much influenced Buddha philosophy . Then he renamed himself 'Angarika Raman'.

In spite of the above mentioned contributions rendered by Manjeri Rama Iyer for the freedom of our country in general and for the eradication of different social evils in Kerala society in particular. The prominent scholars of Kerala history have not sufficiently assessed the contributions rendered by him. The home rule movement was a prominent venue, that played a major role in the national freedom and Indian independence movement.

There were a number of leaders who took lead in the activities of this movements, Manjery Rama Iyer was the most important personality among them. The home rule movement and its some other leaders got attention in the pages of academic studies and in the annals of history. But Manjery Rama Iyer who act as a freedom fighter. Social reformer, a theosophist, a Budhologist of modern Kerala was neglected in history, inspite of his wonderful contribution to the nation and to the humanity. His interventions were brave and dynamic, and hence he deserves special mention in the annals of history.